

dare shelter him; has appeared in person to
 uphold against
 the assembled Bishops in St. Paul's John
 Wiclif, oper
 advocate of confiscating the wealth of die
 English Church,
 There is rioting in London; robbery and
 violence through-
 out a countryside overrun with unemployed
 soldiers from
 the wars in France.

And now, in these months of misgiving
 and disgrace,
 a new book is being copied to its close by
 weary scriven-
 ers—a vision, a whole series of them. That
 indeed is
 nothing new. Poets, especially since the
Roman de la Rose,
 have become a guild of dreamers; falling
 punctually
 asleep on the first page of their work, not to
 wake again,
 except at moments, till the last. Only this
 writer lays
 himself to rest with a simple grace all his
 own:

In a somer seson • whan soft was the sonne,
 I shope (clad) me in shroudes • as I a shepe
 (shepherd) were,
 In habite as an heremite • vnholy of workes,
 Went wyde in this world • wondres to here.
 Ac (but) on a May morninge. on Malverne hilles
 Me byfel a ferly (marvel) • of fairy me thoughte;
 I was wery forwandred • and went me to rest
 Vnder a brode banke - bi a bornes (brook's) side,
 And as I lay and lened • and loked in the wateres,
 I slombred in a slepying • it sweyued (flowed) so
 merye.

Strange, this opening vista of soft sun and
 laughing
 stream—for there is to be through all the
 coming cantos
 hardly another moment of sun or laughter,
 to break the
 grey mists of their melancholy. This
 beginning, at least,
 must be familiar to many who as regards the
 whole work
 have taken Rousseau's general advice about
 too lengthy
 poetry—*Rendons4e court en ne le lisant

pas/ The lines
 were indeed well known already, in this
 year 1377. A
 briefer first version of the poem had
 appeared fifteen years
 before, in 1362. But the work has now
 more than
 doubled its size. The old visions are
 amplified* not always